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ABSTRACT

Three newspaper librarians described how they manage the files of newspaper clippings which are a necessary part of their collections. The development of a new subject classification system for the clippings files was outlined. The new subject headings were based on standard subject heading lists and on local need. It was decided to use a computer printout format, since this was relatively inexpensive and allowed for easy updates. The system began with the newspapers of January 1, 1974, the old clipping files being left as they were. The librarian at the Denver (Colorado) "Post" discussed the problems of updating the subject headings of a clippings file--headings which must change frequently to accommodate new names and concepts as they appear in news stories. Under the supervision of an index editor, a standard procedure was outlined for the daily revision of the subject headings in the "Post's" clipping files. Day-to-day file revision and correction procedures from the Milwaukee (Wisconsin) "Journal and Sentinel" were described. The question-and-answer period which followed these three presentations is transcribed. (SL)

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Subject Classification

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IR 002 015

A Case History of the Development
of a New Subject Classification System

by

Gayle Thompson

The Miami News is an afternoon paper with a circulation of approximately 75,000 and an editorial staff of 85. The library staff consists of three full-time and three part-time people. Two of the full-time positions are held by professional librarians with master's degrees in library science.

The first professional librarian was hired in August of 1971 as part of a reorganization plan for the library. At that time the staff consisted of one full-time clerk and one part-time summer clerk.

For some time the library had been unable to meet the reference and research needs of the newspaper staff. The library operated on a self-service basis, and frequently the reporters were unable to find the information or the material they needed. In addition, the library was chronically behind on its daily work load; it was not unusual for weeks of newspapers and photographs to be backlogged for clipping and filing.

In the fall of 1971, the library established two goals: the first was to increase the capability of the library to process the daily volume of material; the second was to reorganize specific areas of the library which were inadequate. These areas included the clipping and photo files as well as the book, map and pamphlet collections. It was decided that the area which warranted high priority and immediate attention was the subject clip files.

The subject clip files consisted of two separate areas. The first comprised 18 file cabinets, each five drawers high. The second file consisted of about 20 cardboard trans-files located along the top of the 18 file cabinets as well as on various tables around the library. In 1970, the 18 file cabinets had become overcrowded, and the library staff had started using trans-files. Eventually the trans-files became a miniature self-contained file holding material less than two years old. In searching for material, it was necessary to check in both the trans-files and in the 18 file cabinets.

Locating material in the 18 file cabinets was very difficult. The last four cabinets consisted of special individual drawers of material arbitrarily pulled out of the regular alphabetical file. There were no cross references to indicate their special location. These special cabinets contained individual drawers on "Ships," "Outer Space," "Foreign Countries," "Universities," "Sports," "Airplanes," etc. Within the other 14 file cabinets, the files were frequently not in alphabetical order. Apparently this occurred as a result of tight space; a drawer would be moved down two or three drawers to a location that contained more room, regardless of the impact on the alphabetical order.

Perhaps the greatest problem was the manner in which clippings were assigned subject headings. There was no recorded list of headings. The headings used were inconsistent, irrational and arbitrary, generally reflecting years of neglect. Locating material required ingenuity, dedication and a certain amount of luck.

Faced with this situation, the library had two alternatives: first, it could attempt to reclassify and reorganize the old files; second, it could abandon the old files in their disorganized state and start a new system beginning with a pre-determined date in the future.

In studying the first alternative, the library considered making a list of subject headings in the old files and reorganizing not only the subject headings but also the clippings within the files. However, the problems appeared overwhelming. The number of subject headings was estimated at 30,000. To compile such a list and then reorganize it would have been a mammoth task. Without reorganization, the headings were useless. An even more difficult task would have been the reclassification of approximately 30 years of clippings according to a newly structured list of headings. The newspaper could afford neither the time nor the manpower for its accomplishment. Even with such an investment, it was questionable how substantial the improvements would be. It was an unrealistic alternative.

The second alternative had a number of advantages. Various sources had indicated that in newspaper libraries 90 percent of the requests for subject clips are for material less than two years old. These figures were verified in a two-week survey at The Miami News library. According to these statistics, if the library started with an entirely new system, in two years the new system would be handling 90 percent of the requests. With the staff resources of the library, it would not be possible to effectively reorganize the old files, but by starting a new system the library had reason to hope for achieving a major improvement in its service to the editorial staff. The library decided on the second alternative.

The first project was to build the structure of a new subject classification system with established written procedures prior to its implementation. This model system would consist of a list of subject headings incorporating the structure and rules of the new system as well as a written guide detailing the procedure of its operation, in order to insure its consistency and continuity. This model would be the source for assigning headings to stories in the newspaper beginning on the first day of implementation and from that day forward.

The new system developed by the library was based upon a number of important factors. First, it was developed from the subject material used in the library's own clipping files. The library was fortunate in that it had a unique subject file consisting of clippings less than two years old. These headings were contained in the cardboard trans-files mentioned earlier. The 20 boxes consisted of approximately 4,000 headings. These headings were tape-recorded and typed onto three by five cards. It was basically from these headings that the new model system evolved.

Second, the library acquired as many other newspaper library subject heading lists as possible and used them as a comparison in determining not only the underlying structure of the new system but also for determining word usage and phraseology.

Third, the library consulted standard national library lists and procedures. These included the Library of Congress List of Subject Headings, the Sears List of Subject Headings, the headings used in the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, the subject headings used by Facts on File, as well as those in the New York Times Thesaurus of Descriptors and other nationally accepted library subject heading lists and indexing lists.

Fourth, heavy consideration was given to the scope and orientation of The Miami News. The News can be regarded as primarily a local newspaper interested in the events of Dade County. National and international news are supplied by wire and syndicated sources.

Fifth, and very important, the general needs of the reporters (the kind and the form of information requested) played a major role in determining the structure of the new system. The needs of the reporters are reflected in the unique way in which the editorial staff requires local events to be classified. Another newspaper in the same town might prefer information on local events to be filed differently. Even the local public library handles current events differently than the News library. A critical factor is the library clientele.

The most important criteria in determining the new classification system were the first, fourth, and fifth factors listed above. The system was designed to meet the needs of The Miami News editorial staff. The second and third factors were critical for insuring the professional quality of the system and for insuring its long-term success based on an underlying rational structure consistent with established rules and procedures.

Creating the model system comprised the main portion of the manhours involved in developing the new system. It consisted of two parts: first, the model list of Proposed Subject Headings, 90 pages long; and second, a Guide to the Use of the Proposed List of Subject Headings. This guide is the heart of the entire classification system. It explains its basic structure and orientation and is intended to insure its consistency and continuity. The table of contents lists the following topics:

1. Introduction 1
   A. The need for a guide 1
   B. Basis for size and scope of list 2
   C. Basis for filing rules 3

2. Subject vs. Geographic Orientation 3

3. Government Structure 3
   A. Dade 3
   B. Florida 4
   C. United States 4

4. Geographic Treatment 5
A. Within Dade 5
B. Outside of Dade 6
C. Foreign countries 7

5. Types and Wording of Subject Heading 8-10
(Single Word vs. Running Phrase vs. Classified)

6. Organizations: Method of Determining the Main Entry Word 10
A. National associations 10
B. Local community groups 11
C. Government departments 11
D. Business corporations 11

7. Rule of specificity: Choice Between Alternate Headings 12

8. References 13
A. Cross references 13
B. Tracings 14
C. Notes 15

9. Ethnic, Cultural and Special Interest Groups 17

10. Acronyms and Abbreviations 17

11. Treatment of Special Series Stories 18

12. Duplicate Filing

The next major project involved determining the form for maintaining and updating the list of subject headings used on a daily basis. The library considered a number of different forms in use in other libraries across the country but decided on a relatively innovative form--the computer printout.

There are numerous advantages to this format:

1) Multiple cross references can easily be added without overburdening the list, unlike a Linedex, which has a limited capacity.

2) Changes can easily be made to parts of the list.

3) Multiple copies are easily made. The Miami News has one copy for the markers and one that is used by reporters and library users. Also, at various times extra copies have been made for the managing editor and the metro editor.

4) Individual sections can easily be printed separately; for example, a separate listing can be made of those headings pertaining to the Republican National Convention or any other desired subject.

5) It is portable and compact. As you can see, it was easy to bring a copy to the convention here today. This would have been impossible with a Linedex.

6) It is flexible enough to incorporate major changes and improvements in the entire format. In other words, it has long-range capabilities for reprograming to utilize machine-readable type or to generate machine-produced key word listings. Hopefully, it could provide the groundwork for developing a computerized index or list of subject headings which could be interfaced with a microfilm retrieval unit containing clippings.

7) The cost is relatively inexpensive and when compared to the above benefits is sufficiently worth it.

After the decision was made to use the computer printout, the next project involved determining the details of the format and working on the actual programing with the data processing department. This included such problems as recording new headings to be added to the list and maintaining an updated list of subject headings between computer printouts. It was the library's intention to minimize any additional work required. Through careful planning the additional work load equaled, or was perhaps less than, that required for maintaining a Linedex. Any increase in the work load was determined more by the difference between having and not having a list of subject headings than by the use of a computer printout format.

The next step was one of implementation. The date was set at January 1, 1974. Newspapers dated January 1, 1974 were to be marked according to the rules and regulations set down in the Guide to the List of Subject Headings and according to the model list of Proposed Subject Headings. In preparation for the implementation, filing cabinets, as well as file folders, labels and other miscellaneous supplies, were ordered.

Coincidentally, January 1, 1974 was also the date chosen to implement a new system for classifying subject pictures. Prior to that time, subject pictures had been filed in the same folders as the subject clips. This had not been an entirely satisfactory arrangement. The new photo file would parallel as closely as possible the headings used for the new subject clip file.

On January 1, 1974, the new system began. The first day there were perhaps as many as 40 subject headings; the second day, the total was approximately 70. The list grew daily from that point; the printout last week totaled almost 4,000 subject headings. These headings include names of businesses as well as those of community organizations and groups.

Initially the list was printed every week, due to the high quantity of new headings added each day. After a couple of months, as fewer new headings were generated, the list was printed every two weeks. After three months, the list was printed about every two weeks. Then, beginning in April, it was printed once a month, on a permanent basis, as anticipated in the original planning.

The computer printout list is updated daily by making carbons of the labels that are typed for the new file folders. Thus, the original typed label is for the new folder, and a carbon of the label is put into the computer printout list in the correct alphabetical position. The printout list is formulated so that it is of sufficient width to incorporate the carbon labels on the right margin of the listings. When a new subject heading is created, the marker records the heading on a special sheet used later for keypunching. It is from this sheet that the labels and carbons are typed for the file folders and for the printout list. It is also from this sheet that the keypuncher in the data processing department punches the card to be used in the computer program. So the labor consumption consists of the marker recording the subject heading only once and the typist typing the label only once. From this, the daily updating of the printout list and keypunching for the computer is accomplished.

The keypunch cards are used as a means of feeding the information into the computer run; however, the actual merging and sorting is done by a combination of both disk and tape. In other words, the keypunched cards are only a temporary step in the entire program. After a run has been made incorporating whatever changes are desired, the newly generated list is stored on magnetic tape.

The following steps are involved in having a new printout made:

1. The keypunch forms are taken to the data processing department on Friday afternoon.
2. Friday afternoon and evening the cards are punched.
3. On Saturday the cards are run through the computer and the changes to the list are incorporated through a sort and merge process using both disk and tape.
4. On Saturday the new lists are printed.
5. Monday morning, when the library staff reports to work, the computer printout lists are ready.

The new system has been in effect for approximately five months. The impact on the library and the newspaper has been significant. First, the library users have experienced a major difference. It was mentioned above that the library is a self-service one. For the reporters, accessibility to the files and clips is much improved. For them the inconvenience of having two separate sets of files (pre-1974 and post-1974) is insignificant compared to the improvement in retrieval of current 1974 information. And surprisingly, the reporters like to use the list. Rather than automatically use the marker as their "retriever," as frequently occurred before, now the reporters generally go first to the list, which is located right on top of the subject clip file cabinets. They use the list with its many cross references to locate a specific heading before referring to the actual clip files. There are still instances when the library staff is called upon to assist reporters in locating the information they require, but these have been reduced substantially.

Second, the library staff, which has operated both without a list of subject headings and with a list of subject headings, feels that the benefits of the list outweigh the resulting inconvenience of having separate

clip files, i.e., the "old" and the "new."

Third, the new system insures consistency and continuity in the assignment of subject headings to news stories. This is important whether there is one marker or several. Different individuals vary in how they "mark" the paper. Even the same individual marker contradicts himself over a period of time. Having a list with specific guidelines and procedures minimizes this problem.

Fourth, the library clerks are able to use the list, to become familiar with it, and to provide assistance to reporters without constantly interrupting the marker for assistance.

Fifth, the new system also insures continuity in the entire library file and prevents the development of those problems which exist in the "old" Miami News files. Because of them, approximately 30 years of vital history are almost inaccessible.

Sixth, the library service provided to the reporters has been improved substantially. This has enabled the reporters to more effectively research and report information in the stories they write. And this in turn enables The Miami News to improve the quality of the news product read by the public each day. A survey performed by the library some time ago indicated that 42 percent of the locally produced hard copy news in the "A" Section utilized library information or materials. Hopefully, any major improvement in the capability to retrieve information from the library should have a significant impact on that 42 percent of the "A" Section of the newspaper.

In reviewing the project undertaken by The Miami News library, a number of comments can be made. To operate effectively, a newspaper library must have a list of subject headings both to process and classify incoming new material and to retrieve stored material. Ideally, this list should reflect all the subject headings used for the entire clipping file. However, if a library does not have a list of those headings, the important factors to consider are how much elapsed time and how many man-hours would be required to record those headings. Another important factor is how bad the situation is in the subject files. In some cases very little revision work is necessary, and perhaps all that is needed is a typed list of those headings which already exist in the files. The situation at The Miami News was such that a great deal of effort would have been required. The Miami News chose its course of action because, with a minimum of man-hours, a minimum of elapsed calendar time and minimum of expense, it was able to arrive at an entirely new, effective, modernized subject classification system.

For those newspaper libraries which are considering undertaking a similar project or revising their headings, The Miami News would like to mention that it will make available copies of The Proposed List of Subject Headings, The Guide to the Use of the Proposed List of Subject Headings and the most recent computer printout of The List of Subject Headings Used in the Files.

The Stress and Strain of Streaking Through Subject Headings

by

Leslie Parsley

One of the definitions for streaking is "to rush swiftly," but Webster doesn't say anything about rushing swiftly minus one's clothes. In the unlikely event I were to streak through this convention, would you put me under STREAKING, or NUDES & NUDITY, or FADS? Because Denver has had some interesting occurrences in this area, we would use STREAKING to handle the here and now, but we'd also use NUDES & NUDITY for a reference in 10 years when people won't necessarily remember the popular term.

This is an example of why I don't think an index exists which applies to the needs of the newspaper library. None of them deal to the extent that we do with everyday affairs within the framework of a constantly changing language. What index would have STREAKING the first time the term appeared in a story? This is only one of our problems.

Another problem we have is of the opposite extreme: headings which remain fairly stable over the years i.e., city, county, state and federal government, crime, accidents, etc.

I hope that by briefly outlining what we do at the Denver (Colo.) Post I may give you some ideas regarding subject headings--or you may give me some ideas--or we may just all get together and cry for lack of the perfect system. First, I'll illustrate how we routinely update our headings and then I'll briefly describe our present revising project. I've made flow charts to help you understand our setup.

Daily Routine of Updating Headings

We have an index editor who is responsible for the revision and coordination of subject headings in the authority, clip and index files. As they come up, obsolete and irrelevant headings are weeded, new headings are created, and current headings are re-evaluated. All new headings and major changes are subject to the approval of the librarian.

When the filers can't find envelopes for new clips and when the indexers can't find corresponding index cards for new entries, the clips and cards are eventually sent to the index editor. The flow charts will help you see the actual route. If a heading is considered valid and the index editor decides to make it new, she stamps the clips "NEW." The clips then go back to the filers who type new envelopes. The index cards are returned to the indexers who file them in the master file. The index editor then types and files the authority cards with all the new headings.

When we make a revision, the index editor must coordinate the headings between the clip, index and authority files. She does the following: 1) Moves the old clips to their new place in the files and types new envelopes; 2) Types a "SEE" card to be put in place of the old heading;

3) Puts a rubber band around the index cards with the old heading, placing a blue card in front saying what the old heading has been changed to and the date of the change; 4) Puts the old index cards in their new place in the files; 5) Discards the old heading in the authority file and types a new one, including the date of change.

We didn't do all this until I was put in charge, but I think it's most important to take the time to move the old clips and index cards to the new places because, to me, it's only logical to have the same information in one place. Over the years a heading might get changed two or three times.

We now change most--not all--headings when the commonly used words for a subject change. This is simply because when I first started at the Post, I was horrified to find My Lai Massacre under PINKVILLE MASSACRE, the term used then the story was first breaking. I then could fully appreciate the frustrations a reporter might experience when trying to find something in our library, especially if he wanted the Pueblo clips, which were under U.S.--NAVY--VESSELS--INTELLIGENCE SHIPS--PUEBLO, not simply under PUEBLO INCIDENT. I'm a firm believer in creating popular headings. Maybe in 10 years a lot of these terms will be forgotten, but our job is to make information available to reporters who are mostly concerned with current events and who usually know the subject by its popular title.

To help with headings that remain fairly stable, we have what we call standard subdivisions, and I've made copies of some of them for you. These are used for cities, counties, states, countries, universities and other large general headings. These standard subdivisions are the same for every file within a generic heading, although we do have what we call unique headings, i.e. subheadings which are used for one city but not for any other cities.

Our large class headings, i.e. auto accidents, fires, murder, construction, etc., are always broken down with geographical subheadings: Colorado, Denver, Foreign, Metropolitan Area, U.S.

Present Revising Project

As I've said, we're constantly revising our headings as they come up. But right now my assistant and I have gone on a revising rampage that involves a tremendous amount of work and which won't be completed for a few months, although we work on it every day. While we are revising the clips, we're also weeding and realphabetizing them.

Working alphabetically we start by taking a batch of authority cards and checking through them to be sure they are alphabetized correctly under the new system. Then we go to the corresponding section in the clip files. Using the authority cards, we realphabetize the clips, weed out ones that are hopefully to be microfiched at a later date and toss those that we feel are of no value. While we are doing this, we type new envelopes for those subjects which are too thick or too worn and we type new "SEE" cards when necessary. We also make sure that the headings on the envelopes and the authority cards are worded exactly the same; if not, we give them to the index editor to correct. Finally we look out for headings which need

revising and for a heading which might duplicate another, i.e., grocery stores and supermarkets. These are also given to the index editor with instructions on what changes to make.

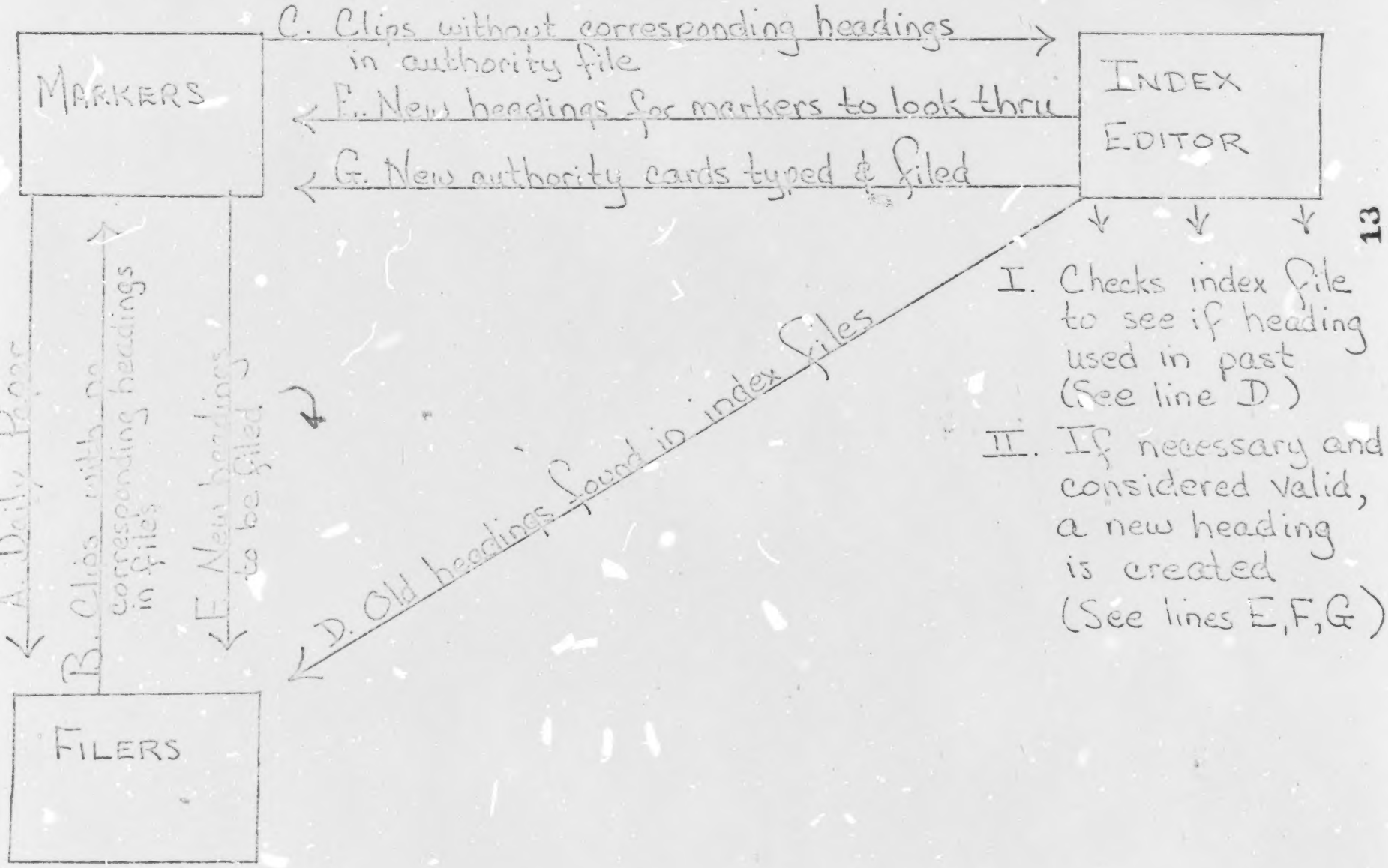
This is a tiresome and agonizingly slow job--it takes two or three days to get through one cabinet--and every single clip is handled at least once, if not more. But I feel it's a job that should be done every three or four years, at least for those of us who aren't as yet automated. With 32,000 headings in current use, it doesn't hurt to double-check every now and then for the sake of getting rid of duplication, increasing consistency and correcting the few errors we ever make.

Our next project will be to tackle the index cards. It takes about two days just to get through half a drawer and we have well over a million cards. In 10 years or so, when the job is finished, I'll let you know how it comes out.

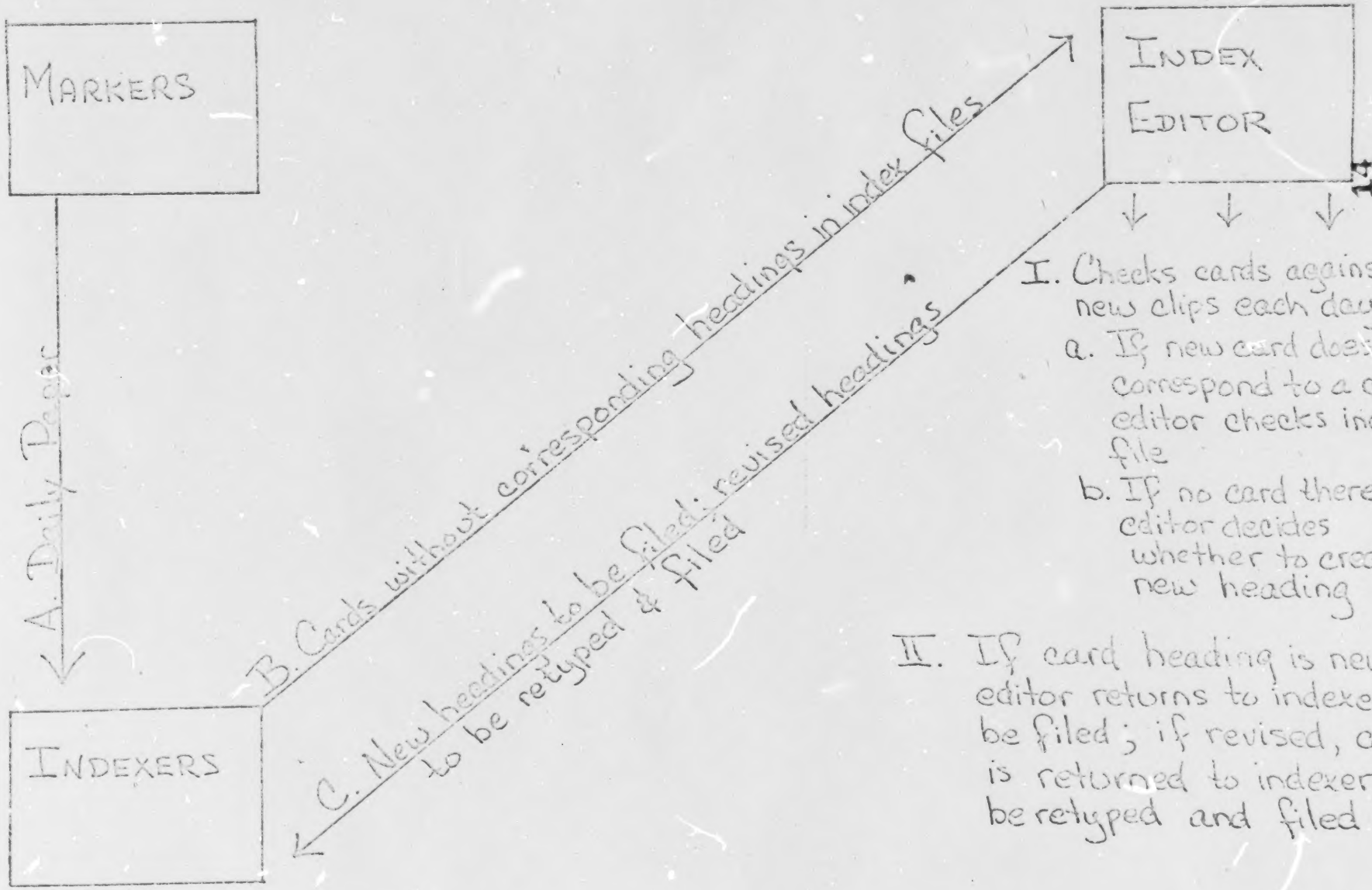
This is only a sketchy outline of all that is involved in creating and revising our headings. If any of you are interested in more detail, I'll be glad to send you copies of the manuals for the markers, indexers, filers and index editors. That way you might get a clearer picture of the actual operation.

CLIPS: NEW HEADINGS

DENVER POST


MARKERS
C. Clips without corresponding headings in authority file
E. News headings for markers to look thru
G. New authority cards typed & filed
INDEX EDITOR
I. Checks index file to see if heading used in past (See line D.)
II. If necessary and considered valid, a new heading is created (See lines E, F, G)
A. Daily Pages
B. Clips with no corresponding headings in files
F. New headings to be filed
D. Old headings found in index files
FILERS

INDEX CARDS: NEW HEADINGS — DENVER POST


MARKERS
INDEX EDITOR
INDEXERS
A. Daily Pages
B. Cards without corresponding headings in index files
C. New headings to be filed; revised headings to be retyped & filed

I. Checks cards against new clips each day
   a. If new card doesn't correspond to a clip, editor checks index file
   b. If no card there, editor decides whether to create new heading

II. If card heading is new, editor returns to indexer to be filed; if revised, card is returned to indexer to be retyped and filed

Revision and Correction of Subject Headings

by

John Franklin

Anne has asked me to describe briefly our day-to-day revision and correction process at the Journal, but I have to preface this a little bit by describing how our system differs from most of the systems that I've seen in operation about the country.

In our clipping file we use a heading such as SHOPPING CENTERS and for every specific news instance on shopping centers we type a new envelope. I don't mean every clipping is all by itself in an envelope. But if a group of developers in Milwaukee decide they are going to build a huge new shopping center on the northwest side, we type a separate envelope for this and put a summary on the outside of the envelope describing the project. All clippings that relate to that project will go into that envelope.

When projects like this are first proposed, we may have as many as 50 or 60 clippings in that envelope before a name is given to the project. One of the revisions that we handle on a day-to-day basis is moving these clippings to the name of the project once the name is finally announced. I just wanted to let you know that we do have the type of filing system where every news event is filed separately; we find it very convenient for retrieval. It is also convenient for the day-to-day revision process.

We handle our revisions and corrections as follows:

We assign one person practically full-time to revisions and corrections. She handles requests from reporters and telephone requests as they come up during the day, but she probably spends from four to six hours a day on revisions and corrections. Most of these are initiated by our markers; I believe six people are involved in marking at one time or another during the week. As the markers go through the paper and find stories that involve some sort of file revision or correction, they mark a separate clipping with an "R" for revision. This will be clipped out by clippers and filed in a separate stack. These clippings end up on the girl's desk in the morning. She usually follows up on these revisions by checking with the marker. But in some cases they are so obvious that she just goes ahead.

We go back through the clipping file on these revisions and change everything that is applicable to the new heading or to the subdivision of the old heading. We also follow up in reference books on many of these things. If an elected official resigns or dies, for instance, and a new official is appointed, we make the change in various reference books in case a reporter comes in and just grabs a book off the shelf to see who holds this office at this time.

A lot of the revisions that we have are for corporations which either merge or change their names or decentralize in some way and establish half a dozen new divisions. These can be quite a problem at times. Many of these stories are confusing even when you have the accompanying explanations. We usually end up checking with the business editor, who is familiar with the situation.

We also have a policy of changing a woman's file from her maiden name to her married name when she marries. We do have exceptions to this. If the woman is famous in her own right and is still going to use her maiden name professionally, we will leave the file where it is and use a cross reference card from her married name.

I think that it is very important in our business to keep up these day-to-day revisions. If you do have a file that indicates that a corporation or an institution has a certain name and you've got your envelopes typed with this heading on it, a reporter will come in just to check the spelling. He'll look at the envelope, take the name off and now you've got not only a revision, but a correction, to do.

We get quite a number of correction memos. Some of these are very picayunish. A story will run on something, and the next day you will get a phone call from the public relations man of a firm saying something was not exactly correct. If it's a minor detail and we don't want to run a corrected story, what we do is attach the memo to the story. If we run a printed correction, we physically attach the corrected story to the one that was in error. We glue the two together so that there is very little chance of a reporter using a story that was in error and not seeing the correction.

We correct the papers as much as possible before they are sent out for microfilming. If the correction appears too late, about the only recourse we have is to put some sort of flag on the microfilm box itself. I don't really think this is too effective. If you go to the microfilm cabinet and pick out a reel of film and there's some writing on the box, you aren't going to stand there and study the writing before you put the reel on the reader. But at least it's there for anyone who does want to use it.

I think that I am going to pass at this point. If anyone has any specific questions about any of this, I'll be perfectly willing to try to defend our policies or to discuss yours on any of these points.

Question and Answer Period

Mary Lou Lathrop, Bell & Howell Microphoto Division:
I have a couple of questions. One, when you decide to shift a clipping file, do you review all the previous clips? From what you said, it sounds like you are getting more specific when you create a heading. Do you review all your previous clips? Or do you simply move them en masse?

Leslie Parsley, Denver (Colo.) Post:
It depends.

Lathrop: So you might split a file?

Parsley: Yes.

Lathrop: Would you describe your process of validating new headings? What do you do when your marker suggests that a new heading be created or when something comes down the pipe that was not a heading before?

Parsley: That's the problem when you don't have a standard procedure. The index editor is not too great on alphabetizing but she has an incredible memory. She is very good at this, and she will check the more than 32,000 headings in our index files--we have every heading that's ever been used in our paper. We clip both national and international, so she looks under every possible heading that a suggested new heading might have been put under at one time. It may be that the heading hasn't been used for 10 years, but it has been used. If she can't find the heading, we go ahead and create a new one. I think for human beings this is pretty good.

Carol Lindsey, Toronto (Ont.) Star:
My question is directed to Gayle. I agree wholeheartedly with your approach. The vast majority of requests deal with material that is less than two years old. Have you ever thought about what you are going to do with that old material? As the years go by, will you eventually throw it out, or retain it, or what?

Gayle Thompson, Miami (Fla.) News:
The solution that we thought of seemed like the logical one to us, but it requires staff. I don't know when we will ever take care of those files. We thought of going through and weeding them out first because there's so much in there that we don't really need. We thought of just going through and throwing out the national and international news first, and then microfilming what was left and putting the microfilm on jackets in the files. These jackets would have to have headings on them representing what's on the folders. When we file all these jackets, we thought it would be easy to combine some of the files. But as far as reworking all the clips, we decided we will never do that; we should just weed it and film it. When we microfilm, we will inevitably produce a list of headings for the jackets. But at the present time I have no idea if we will ever do all this--we don't have the staff.

Janice Levis, Chicago (Ill.) Daily News and Sun Times:
(Inaudible but asks: Would you explain what you mentioned about shopping centers and their clip files?)

John Franklin, Milwaukee (Wisc.) Journal & Sentinel:
We have in our file something like 50 or 60 envelopes on shopping centers. Each of these envelopes deals with the general subject of shopping centers in one way or another. For example, someone has done a survey and has found that there is a shopping center for every three million people. This survey would be filed in a separate envelope. The envelope would have a summary stating that the contents concerned statistics on shopping centers and that related stories ought to be filed there.

We also have envelopes that relate to specific shopping center projects that are unnamed for some reason or other. The material may have to do with crime in that shopping center, with the actual construction of it or with a zoning problem. But each envelope will have a summary on the outside and all related stories will be filed together. There are times when we may have to file one clipping in two of three different places under SHOPPING CENTERS because it touches on a number of things. But at the same time when a reporter comes in with a request he can pull out a specific envelope and everything that he wants is in that envelope. That's the philosophy behind the system. It's also the reason we have a staff that varies from 22 to 26 when most papers our size have half that many. We put a lot more work into getting clippings into the files and we just enjoy the fact that it takes a lot less effort to get them out. Does that answer your question?

Unidentified questioner: (Inaudible but asks: Why did you go to computer printout rather than some visible listing for subject headings?)

Thompson: One of the reasons we decided on a computer printout list is that we felt it wouldn't really be any more expensive than a Linedex. The computer time is minimal; you're talking about seconds and fractions of seconds. The initial programming cost for us would have been between $50 and $100, but we were in a really big rush and I wanted the programming done by January 1. We put some people on overtime and the programming cost was $200. Our biggest expense right now is keypunch; computer time is minimal. I would like to go to using optical scanners so we wouldn't have to keypunch any more.

Initially we made printouts weekly. March's bill was $86. But last month's bill was about $40. That includes all the computer time and all the keypunch. So it's not very much.

From what I understand, the computer printout lists that are being used in other libraries present a problem maintaining files of the keypunch cards. The minute you have a tracing, you must link the following keypunch card with the preceding keypunch card. There's no way of keeping the two together, so it involves a tremendous filing and formating problem. Our cards are punched but they're processed through a combination of both magnetic tape and disk drive and they're kept in the computer. After a period of time specified by the data processing department, the cards

are thrown away. So we don't have anything at all to do with keeping the punched cards.

Ernest Perez, Houston (Tex.) Chronicle:
(Inaudible, but asks about problems of determining word filing order in the computer list.)

Thompson: I'm not sure if I'm answering your question--if I'm not, tell me. Right now we have to determine manually where in the list an addition or deletion is going to be. We do have the capability of having the list self-alphabetized; it's just a matter of my sitting down with data processing to work up a program for this. I plan on doing this as soon as possible so that we won't have to add in the number manually for each new heading. We use numbers to determine the file location for the headings in the list. However, the computer does the alphabetizing for us. The computer will alphabetize a word the way the library decides to enter it. If "The Jones Company" is a heading, we decide whether it should go under T or J. When the computer self-alphabetizes, it will use the first letter entered by the library staff.

The subject heading list is a sequential number list and we just insert it into the numbers. We do this once a month just before we take the list down for keypunch. This takes about an hour. And this hour is what I want to eliminate by having the computer arrange the list itself.

When we work out a program for self-alphabetizing we will have to consider filing problems. Dr. Hines from the Columbia University Library Science School has written a number of publications on computer filing rules and we plan to study his publications.

Unidentified questioner: (Inaudible but asks about remarking the headings on old clips in the process of changing the subject headings.)

Parsley: Do you mean on the clip itself? It depends on how extensive--and popular--the file is. If it's a huge file, say WATERGATE, and we wanted to change the name from something else to WATERGATE, we wouldn't remark every clip. The file is too big. And besides everybody would be familiar with the new heading because it's so popular. If it's a small file and also very popular, we will take the time to change the heading on every clip. It depends on the circumstances; there's no set rule.

Unidentified questioner: (Inaudible but asked about breaking up large files.)

Thompson: We had subjects in 18 cabinets of old files. The "M" files for MIAMI, the "D" files for DADE and the "F" files for FLORIDA took up almost the entire file. But the reporters would try to locate material by the general subject first rather than by the geographic or governmental jurisdiction. When they come in, they want the file on THE POLICE DEPARTMENT or THE FIRE DEPARTMENT or THE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD. We decided that if that's what they want, if that's the way they think, why not arrange the material that way rather than making them go first to MIAMI or FLORIDA or DADE COUNTY? This has worked a lot better for us.

So we have POLICE DEPARTMENT - MIAMI and POLICE DEPARTMENT - DADE. Of course, we have certain procedures. We always break down by subjects before we go to a geographic breakdown. We would use AIR POLLUTION - LAWS AND LEGISLATION - FLORIDA. We don't use AIR POLLUTION - FLORIDA - LAWS AND LEGISLATION. We put the whole subject first and then we put the geographic location.

There are, however, times when we put the geographic location first. We put the business of running a city or state or county under FLORIDA - GOVERNMENT, for instance, or MIAMI - GOVERNMENT - CITY COMMISSION or MIAMI - GOVERNMENT - CHARTER. The running of the government itself goes under the name of the municipality. But any subject operation of the government like the Police Department or the Pollution Control Board goes under the specific subject, not the name of the municipality. There are notes in the printout list which refer the user from governments to subjects, etc.

Anne Sausedo, Washington (D.C.) Post:
Are there any more questions?

Unidentified questioner: (Inaudible, but apparently questioned what sources The Miami News used when determining the wording and correct phrasing of a new subject heading.)

Thompson: The New York Times Thesaurus of Descriptors was totally worthless for us. We like the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature. Facts on File is usually too broad. The Library of Congress List of Subjects I guess I don't use at all anymore. Our subject approach, that is, subject versus geography, I think is fairly different from most.

Sandy [illegible], Tucson (Ariz.) Daily Star:
(Inaudible, but apparently asked about the cost involved in computer printout.)

Thompson: Sandy, when I gave you those cost figures for the month of March, I said they were $86, but we had made a lot of printouts that month. Of that $86, $52 was keypunch expense. So our major cost is keypunching and in my mind you're going to have the same cost typing up Linedex cards. Since it's the same labor cost, really very little of it could be called computer cost.

Homer Martin, Bergen Co. (N.J.) Record:
Gayle, could I come in on that? Gayle has a unique situation. I think she had to go to a separate corporation to get this work done. Many of you have your own data processing departments and computer facilities in-house. If you know the man in charge and if it's a marginal operation, you could get him to do the keypunching for you on the side and run the computer late at night.

Sausedo: Thank you very much.